

# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

# Complexity, contingency and coming into play

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Picking up the the association of architectural educators' broader concern with strategies for the coproduction of architectural knowledge, this contribution outlines the Modes of Play methodology developed by the research and teaching programme Urban Design over a series of Live Projects. Furthermore, the contribution re-visits historical promises of coproduction in architectural education and practice through the concept of disciplining mo(ve)ments. The contribution's central perspectivation of coproduction evolves around the notion that space and knowledge are equally products of acting and perceiving.

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# Introduction

Today's foundational conceptualisation of coproduction was developed by a group of researchers at Indiana University and The University of North Carolina in the late 1970s. The group's work aimed to better understand increasing crime rates in Chicago after police officers policing neighbourhoods were displaced from walking the sidewalks to behind the steering wheels of police cars. 'Coproduction involves a mixing of the productive efforts of regular and consumer producers'.<sup>1</sup> The pertinent aspect opening up the issue of coproduction is the research group's notion that coproduction is often overlooked or met with turned up noses by 'regular' service providers – organised bureaus and firms and public administrators – yet attributed an increasing importance 'due to fiscal pressures and partly due to evidence regarding the inefficacy of their own unaided efforts'<sup>2</sup>. Policing is not without reason the main topic in the 1970s study. A rising number of neighbourhood watch groups, corruption and myopic policing strategies sparked a general debate on cities and crime in the United States and the transformation of urban governance in what later would be described as the early days and sites of neoliberalisation. In today's words: The research group argued for a situational analysis of urban governance focusing on relations across hypothetical dichotomies in order to build problem solving approaches from there rather than based on simplistic models.

Among them was later Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom, who continued to reflect on the issue in her scholarly activities. Her revised concept refers to coproduction as the 'process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not 'in' the same organization'.<sup>3</sup> This concept met harsh criticisms from public administration purists – mainly because between the lines, Ostrom's work seeks to uncover that purity in the understanding of economic action between public and private, market and state or government and civil society is counterproductive if not violent. She kept insisting that removing artificial walls surrounding (false) dichotomies with the aim of changing the views of social sciences towards the hypothetical 'Great Divide' was in fact necessary in order to draw a more complex picture of the actual events. Ostrom empirically analyses the realisation processes of major social and technical infrastructure projects with a focus on coproduction as capacity to constructively process operational challenges. 'No market can survive without extensive public goods provided by governmental agencies. No government can be efficient and equitable without considerable input from citizens. Synergetic outcomes can be fostered to a much greater extent than our academic barriers have let us contemplate.'<sup>4</sup> Ostrom's late work on the management of commons frequently revisits the early work on coproduction with the aim to organise the interplay of a heterogeneous set of actors through a variety of means. Her work is commonly part of research, teaching and practice projects in spatial and infrastructure planning, amongst others. There, problematising coproduction promises to re-gain an apparently disappearing knowledge of how the actual events (ought to) unfold in space. In urban development, increasing complexity on a number of levels and dimensions (such as planning and building as well as environmental laws, institu-

tional actors and their inter-relations and responsibilities, construction techniques, compartmentalisation) is diagnosed as loss of control and of overview, leading to the perception of a crisis of the planning and designing disciplines<sup>5</sup>. However, a loss of control and overview only appears from the perspectivation of the actual events through well-established nominal responsibilities. Are there cases of Ostrom's original problematisation of coproduction in architectural education? Is there a similar 'Great Divide' hypothetically and in fact drawing the line between what is possible and what is not?

1. Parks, Roger B., Paula C. Baker, Larry Kiser, Ronald Oakerson, Elinor Ostrom, Vincent Ostrom, and others, 'Consumers as Coproducers of Public Services: Some Economic and Institutional Considerations', *Policy Studies Journal*, 9 (1981), p. 1002 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.1981.tb01208.x>
2. *ibid.* p. 1001
3. Ostrom, Elinor, 'Crossing the Great Divide: Coproduction, Synergy, and Development', *World Development*, 24 (1996), p. 1073
4. *ibid.* 1083
5. Zimmermann, Karsten, 'Relevanz, Wandel Und Anforderungen Wissenschaftlicher Politikberatung in Der Raumplanung', *DisP - The Planning Review*, 53 (2017), pp. 21–32 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02513625.2017.1414478>

# Historical promises of coproduction in architectural education

The Michigan Debates on Urbanism problematized motifs, methodologies, responsibilities and formats in emerging, dominant and residual modes of practices in and with urbanisms in the US. Margaret Crawford in opposition to Michael Speaks in volume 1 of *Everyday Urbanism* had to defend an ‘attitude toward the city’ in architecture as allegedly bottom-up and thus to incremental for urban planning’s general ambition to bring about sustainable urban development. Her many responses to the debate and later on in publications try to do away with the traditional scales and scopes of bottom-up vs. top-down and formal vs. informal by taking into account actually and actively engaging existing mutual perspectives. Her book *Everyday Urbanism* <sup>1</sup> is a plea for engaging with different forms of urbanism unfolding in space. ‘Suburbia, in-between areas, everyday space or whatever you want to call it. All those strip malls and parking lots are our environment and we need to engage with them in a productive way. That is what *Everyday Urbanism* is all about, understanding the American built environment as it is rather than yearning for some other set of circumstances.’

The perspectivation of the urban as is has a prominent history in architectural education. About half a century ago, following Louis Wirth’s notion of ‘urbanism as a way of life’ <sup>2</sup>, two architects worked against architecture’s purity as a discipline. In a recent interview with Denise Scott-Brown, she recalled that ‘Bob Venturi was the only member of the architecture faculty [at Penn] who sympathized with my attempts to straddle architecture and planning responsibly and also imaginatively.’ Scott-Brown joined Penn in 1960 and together with Venturi was hired to relate theory to design. ‘From that time, we worked together—first as teachers, communicating ideas and subject matter, tying coursework to studio, architecture to planning, and the subject matter that interested [us], to the students’ work and ours as designers. In 1964 I ran the work topics, seminars and term papers for both courses. Bob’s lectures introduced new ways for architects to approach history as designers and formed the basis for *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*.’ <sup>3</sup> There they argued to stop Mies van der Rohe-like modernism from becoming the building industry’s wet dream – pure construction. Both built their arguments on Kevin Lynch 1960s work *The Image of the City* <sup>4</sup>, which tried to operationalise the coproduction of meaning of places realised on the basis of doing field research and mapping its results.

Scott-Brown and Venturi used these methods in combination with others in their seminal project *Learning from Las Vegas*. The project started as a manifesto-like piece in *Architectural Forum* in March 1968 conceived and written by Denise Scott-Brown and Robert Venturi entitled *A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas*. They wanted to do away with projects indebted to heroic and monumental modernism, transpose an existing urban situation into the

academic realm of architectural production and re-negotiate education from there. In the piece *Mourning the Suburbs: Learning from Levittown*, Beatrice Colonna tells the reader about the ‘density of urban unrest and challenges to normative architectural education’ during Scott-Brown and Venturi’s tenure at the School of Architecture at Yale University <sup>5</sup>. ‘Yale provided a focal point for demonstrators who were angry about the ongoing Vietnam War and about societal institutions that were slow to act on matters of racial and gender inequality’. <sup>6</sup> Scott-Brown, Venturi transposed their thinking into writing and then into a prototype teaching project. The team taught and co-developed with their students from architecture and graphic design new approaches in an integrative, hands-on and explorative way. The final spreads in the first published edition represent Venturi and Scott-Brown’s efforts to be inclusive to alternative perspectives with the aim not only to process the relations between observers and their aesthetics, but also to convey an understanding of the city as a ‘set of activities’ <sup>7</sup>. Later the project was made public in the form of an exhibition and Scott-Brown and Izenour together with the student Virginia Carroll scripted a plan for another studio titled *Learning from Levittown*. However, the criticism within the School of Architecture about the approach and resources used in its operationalisation eventually drove Venturi to give up teaching at all. However, what in re-visiting *Learning from Las Vegas* appears pertinent for today’s efforts in coproduction in architectural knowledge is the plea towards the architect to sharpen the view of the existing world in its actual and not in its imagined complexity.

Looking at it today, we can find a shared presentiment with Crawford, Venturi and Scott-Brown and later Ostrom. Space comes into existence in a performative process through practical action. In other words: what such perspectives on urbanism call for is to develop a methodology for analysing practices in and of this formation process grounded in contingency. Such a methodology emphasises the formats that operationalize the engagement with forms through their ‘disciplining moments’ <sup>8</sup> and help to relate competencies acquired through this engagement to organizing, representing and projecting future forms of urbanism. Everyday urbanism as ‘an attitude toward the city that can have a number of formal outcomes’ promised to deliver projects in territories where authorities operate with insufficient resources to structure the realisation of projects. <sup>9</sup> Many of these areas appear in fact anti-urban.

One of the crucial insights produced in the coproduction of the above mentioned mo(ve)ments was the acknowledgement of the unsuitability of methods in architecture to capture an understanding of the existing city in its use. Transposing this self-critical observation into a claim (we need new methods) and translating this claim into a practical undertaking (we are engaging in cataloguing and analysing the existing city with an interest to understand it), the studios engaged in what would somewhat ironically become itself an iconic mode of co-producing architectural knowledge <sup>10</sup>. This raises the question: what is *Learning from Las Vegas/Everyday Urbanism* today?

1. Chase, John, Margaret Crawford, and Kaliski John, eds., *Everyday Urbanism: Expanded, Expanded* ed. edition (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2008)

2. Wirth, Louis, ‘Urbanism as a Way of Life’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 44 (1938), pp. 1–24

3. Scott Brown, Denise, *Learning from ‘Learning from Las Vegas’ with Denise Scott Brown, Part I: The Foundation*,

- 2016 <https://archinect.com/features/article/149970924/learning-from-learning-from-las-vegas-with-denise-scott-brown-part-i-the-foundation> (accessed 10 July 2018)
4. Lynch, Kevin, *Image of the City* (MIT Press, 1960)
  5. Colomina, Beatriz, 'Mourning the Suburbs: Learning from Levittown', *Public: Art | Culture | Ideas*, 43 (2011) <http://www.publicjournal.ca/43-suburbs-leona-drive-catalogue/>
  6. Shelton, Jim, 'The May Day Rally, in Words and Pictures', *YaleNews*, 2015 <https://news.yale.edu/2015/04/29/-may-day-rally-words-and-pictures> (accessed 10 July 2018)
  7. Venturi, Robert, Steven Izenour, and Denise Scott Brown, *Learning from Las Vegas - Revised Edition: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*, revised edition edition (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1977), p. 76.
  8. Holert, Tom, 'Formsachen. Netzwerke, Subjektivität, Autonomie', in *Kreation und Depression: Freiheit im gegenwärtigen Kapitalismus*, ed. by Christoph Menke and Juliane Rebentisch, Neuauflage. Sonderausgabe. (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2012), pp. 129–48
  9. Speaks, Michael, Margaret Crawford, and Doug Kelbaugh, *Everyday Urbanism: Michigan Debates on Urbanism I*, ed. by Rahul Mehrotra (Ann Arbor, Mich: University of Michigan, Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, 2005)
  10. Ruhl, Carsten, 'Der romantische Ikonograph', *archplus*, Wohnen – wer mit wem, wo, wie, warum, 176/177 (2006), pp. 4–5

# From disciplines to disciplining

The earlier assembled empirical cases of transposing contingency and complexity into architectural production/urban design/planning problematise operational challenges in relation to the involved disciplines and their disciplinary approaches. Here, we propose to further develop operational challenges in knowledge production through the concept of disciplining mo(ve)ments. The concept is taken from Tom Holert and his writings on forms of cooperation in the project-based Polis <sup>1</sup>. Transposed into the problematisation of coproduction, disciplining mo(ve)ments occur through de-regulation and networking in the form of projects and become apparent when positionality is performed as countering viable modes of realising projects.

Working in interdisciplinary teams, or across any other theoretical divide, requires mutual understanding of disciplinary languages and the disposition to communicate. The operationalisation of such mutual understandings more often than not relies on trust and an acknowledgement of reciprocity in the process. What we glean from the above assembled examples from Ostrom, Crawford and Venturi and Scott-Brown is the recognition that the emerging as well as existing urban mo(ve)ments are ambivalent: While disciplines structurally enable coherent arguments and perspectives, these must not be mistaken with structure. What needs addressing may not always fall into the domains of existing disciplines, field of competencies and/or budgets of existing organisations and/or actors. Processing complex dispositions of actors and organisations does provide an educational challenge for current and future urban professionals.

1. Holert, Tom, 'Formsachen. Netzwerke, Subjektivität, Autonomie', in: Christoph Menke and Juliane Rebentisch (Eds.), *Kreation und Depression: Freiheit im gegenwärtigen Kapitalismus*, Berlin 2012, pp. 129–148.

# Operationalising a concern with the urban

Urban Design at HCU Hamburg as practiced and taught is a relationally interdisciplinary undertaking that – while taking seriously architecture’s promises and problems – aims less at a projected future design (without excluding this option) and instead is more concerned with understanding the coming into being of specific situations, sites and settings and the more or less arbitrary powers that contribute to their existence. It is also transdisciplinary as the team and students work with actors and institutions across and outside of academia. Research, teaching and practice are understood as triad; research and teaching are practiced as much as informed by praxis while practice in turn draws from knowledge produced through research activity and conversely feeds back into teaching. The concern with the urban is motivated by the recognition that we need to understand the conditions under which the architecture of the urban – as opposed to architecture as product alone – is (co-)produced. The urban as relational whole concerns us, it is our motif and engagement with it is a ‘matter of concern’<sup>1</sup>. Christopher Dell picks up Jacques Rancière’s notion of ‘scopic regimes’<sup>2</sup> that deserve unpicking: What regulates our modes of seeing, reading and producing the urban and how do we communicate these often implicit agencies?<sup>3</sup>

A major motif for urban design overall is to consider how planning interacts with and intervenes into the world under the premise that the production of (urban) space takes place on all scales and cannot be reduced to one disciplinary or scalar perspective given that disciplines and scales themselves are socially constructed and represent transmission belts of organising the everyday. In this vein, the existing city can be seen an assemblage of previous and ongoing interventions and future vectors, including plans and contingencies each informed by specific truths or norms. In fact, the research and teaching programme Urban Design attempts to open up various scales and perspectives so as to re-assemble different, sometimes conflicting, versions of one reality in their having-becomeness so as to unlock hidden potentials. Led by emerging, yet specific and iteratively developed motifs and relating these individual motifs to urban questions at large as well as issues arising from personal and broader interests, research activities are concerned with both retrospection and projection. The study departs from a deep analysis of a given situation in the now and here (or there) with a view to produce knowledge about common, alternative and new understandings of possible ways to influence particular vectors and possibilities. This approach is a disciplined undertaking in that it is clearly rooted in and drawing on the established disciplines (from which students and staff are recruited) and (at least minimally) structured in its process, while simultaneously disturbing a mono-disciplinary and object-centred approach by working with open form(at)s.

Given that the urban is a manifold phenomenon that cannot be grasped wholly by one discipline alone, the inter- and transdisciplinary perspective attempts to pay justice to its matter of facts by engaging with its matters of concern. It does so

through a diagrammatical reading of the urban. Borrowing from linguistics, the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic dimensions of knowledge production are addressed: First, the motif, thematic interests and approach are articulated; secondly, their inherent (or non-existing or emerging) order and causality are formulated and thirdly, methodical steps are identified that are necessary to undertake co-productive research. 4

1. Latour, Bruno, 'Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern' *Critical Inquiry* 30(2) (2004), pp. 225-248.
2. Ranciere, Jacques, *Disagreement: Politics And Philosophy*, First Printing edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004)
3. Dell, Christopher, 'Recht auf den Gebrauch der Stadt. Zur Normativität des Städtischen', in *Hiatus: Architekturen für die gebrauchte Stadt*, ed. by Ute Frank, Verena Lindenmayer, Patrick Loewenberg, and Carla Rocneanu (Basel ; Boston: Birkhäuser, 2017), pp. 223–38
4. Sturm, Gabriele, *Wege zum Raum: Methodologische Annäherungen an ein Basiskonzept Raumbezogener Wissenschaften*, (Opladen: Leske + Budrich Verlag, 2000)

# Modes of Play

We work along four epistemological modes of engagement with the urban on its various scales: (1) Coming into play, (2) How to play, (3) Play and (4) Understanding the play. These four modes are repeated iteratively in research and teaching and are continuously developed so as to keep the process open. This openness, however, is not without structure. A minimal structure is provided by what we call Takes that serve to order theoretical considerations, practical issues and experiences, and reflections. The Take is a specific didactic form that derives from film and music. In jazz, for instance, a take is the recording of a piece in different versions with different improvisations. In research, teaching and design activities, the Take allows looking at different aspects of a situation, seeing a situation from different perspectives with different assemblages of theories and methods and reflecting under different circumstances. Serial fragmentation, taking apart and re-assembling, cataloguing and indexing are employed so as to pay attention to immanent potentialities and account for contingency, which is crucial for a real-life and contextual understanding of learning and practice in Urban Design. We are less interested in the representational effects an image seeks to trigger and more in the representation of traces into which are inscribed the possibilities of new ways of production (of meaning, of knowledge).

## Coming into play

A series of Takes offer the concentrated collection and assemblage of data gathered from an always particular perspective and relating it back to context and its mode of production. This perspective requires both grounding in a relational understanding of space as socially co-produced and reflection over how a subjective 'matter of concern'<sup>1</sup> presents an entry point to creating an argument that problematizes a situation without closing its vector by seeking a solution. The collected material presents raw data that is analysed and re-assembled throughout the process of framing a project. Reviewed individually at first and then together when all Takes have been undertaken provides the basis to consider the specific focus under which the project will continue. Without claiming a finished product or result, working with a series of Takes is a first step of getting involved and coming into play.

## How to play

The series of Takes provides the minimal structure necessary to work with an open form. Serving to produce perspectives and glimpses, associations and emphases rather than complete assignments, the Take is a way of collecting and working with material without closing it, i.e. without finalising a specific interpretation so that the collected material remains open for further perspectives, analyses and interpretations apart from the perhaps obvious disciplinary stand-

point. Both the approach and concrete means and instruments to gather, document, analyse and interpret data are introduced in two subsequent methodology seminars and simultaneously applied in the projects. Methods of data collection (perception, observation, survey and interview) are followed by methods of documentation and visualisation (documentation, cartography, diagrammatic, narration) and lead to methods of data analysis and interpretation (Situational Analysis, Scenario). The superposed process of designing the research determines the specific application of this chronological order of going about a research undertaking. Following the emergence and articulation of a motif, a research question is framed and, if necessary, broken down into different aspects, which serves to clarify the research interest. The constant repetition and articulation of motif, question and interest in iterative loops throughout a research process borrows from music etudes and film takes. The engagement with the 'how' thus includes the reiteration and specification of the 'what', while the explication of the 'what' conversely feeds into the clarification of the 'how' – the kinds of data that need to be collected, documented, analysed and interpreted.

## Play

After a number of Takes have been undertaken, the collected material is now ready to be cut up, re-assembled and scaled up or down. Play, the liberal and open, yet internally structured and methodically applied research activity, echoes Arendt's notion of agency. We transpose three of Arendt's criteria in relation to action. That is firstly the connotation of the Greek '*archein*', the ability to begin<sup>2</sup> – which leads to an unorthodox re-linking of *archein* to *architecton* –, secondly the character of unexpectedness as 'inherent in all beginnings'<sup>3</sup> and thirdly the capacity to 'act in concert'<sup>4</sup>. Playing with material (i.e. sketches, photos, interviews, descriptions), questions, ideas and associations as well as theoretical considerations (Grounded Theory and Actor-Network approaches) and practiced experiences (i.e. perceptions, observations, reflective mappings) enables or lays open a relationality and perspective that over-structured or overly teleological exercises do not allow to emerge. In fact, while exercises appear as streamlined paths to specific results, the Take gives an impulse, requires a personal interest to be taken up; it is impossible for students, academics or practitioners to undertake a Take without a motif. This understanding of work as play also involves the work's presentation using A4 (and all other DIN-formats resulting of possible combinations of) sheets of paper pinned to the wall, so as to enable a discussion of the material in its intra-scalar relationality. Presentation here is not so much the graded exam situation in which students show their work and then sit back; it is in fact somewhat the opposite, another start as students and lecturers together discuss the issues and questions arising through a diagrammatical reading of the raw material and its context so as to unlock alternative ways of reading it out and developing further perspectives, new questions and novel relations from within it.

## Understanding the play = Display

In light of the above noted handling of wall presentations, the final submissions by students are again displayed on the wall, yet without making claims to a final, closing product that answers all the questions emerging during the research process. Rather, the book – or pages and excerpts from it – present their own diagrammatic take on the subject at hand. The display itself turns into a mode of play and provides another step in the course of the research-practice. Making both data and the ways in which it is dealt with accessible plays a crucial part in communicating the research without losing motif, research question and epistemological interest out of sight. This way, the process of doing research becomes part of the research project rather than following an abstract procedure merely applied to the project. The way the display is set up – both in terms of its content and its form – thus serves to open up further ways of reading the data, making connections and re-assembling knowledge, for instance by way of holding a reception, involving the communities that the research addressed, or a round table that invites all research participants to discuss the results. The research activity is actively understood as an intervention and thus as a way of posing questions rather than proving something or producing definite results.

So how do these different modes of play – of playing with disciplinary and disciplining coproduction – unfold in the research-practice as taught? The following three vignettes can only provide glimpses into the lived practice of doing research and teaching. Despite their brevity, however, these glimpses figure like Takes: they are limited, meander between description and research conceptualisation and are by no means complete pictures or representations of the situations in question. On the contrary, they are employed with a view to illustrate that a situation cannot be grasped before we actually engage with it: ‘The fundamental challenge is the kind of search when you don’t know what you’re looking for but will recognize it when you find it.’<sup>5</sup>

1. Latour, Bruno, ‘Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern’, *Critical Inquiry*, 30 (2004), 225–48 <https://doi.org/10.1086/421123>
2. Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 177)
3. *ibid.* p. 178
4. *ibid.* p. 179
5. Stark, David, ‘Searching Questions: Inquiry, Uncertainty, Innovation’, *Working Paper Series, Center on Organizational Innovation*, Columbia University, 2008  
[http://www.columbia-coi.com/media/papers/stark\\_searching\\_questions.pdf](http://www.columbia-coi.com/media/papers/stark_searching_questions.pdf)

# Zoom in – three disciplinary form(at)s or situations, settings, sites.

Situations, settings and sites are notions with different definitions in different disciplines, although they roughly correspond in their meaning with similar framings. While ‘situation’ refers to the social, psychological, professional, environmental etc. conditions or circumstances, ‘setting’ more explicitly refers to the time and space in which an action or activity takes place. ‘Site’ in architecture, urban planning and urban design most explicitly refers to the grounds on which something is planned or built. In listing the three notions, we aim to problematize the often unquestioned framing supposed tasks and projects. Working with the notion of the Take as discussed above we delegate the setting of the setting to those engaging in an activity with a view to making the framing part of the game. Framing a particular project becomes part of the project and so necessarily involves critical discussion of how existing frames come about, what they imply and which kinds of solutions they transport. <sup>1</sup>

## Interkulturelle Praxis | Territorium Kunstverein 2014

On a Tuesday afternoon in the 2014 summer semester, 25 Urban Design master students, a tutor and a lecturer gather at 2pm in the foyer of Hamburger Kunstverein, an arts association with a 200-year history. The foyer is a large, white, mostly empty and very high space with difficult acoustics. The group assembles at a two-fold conjuncture: Having just taken up the director’s post, Bettina Steinbrügge is concerned with questions pertaining to the institution ‘Verein’ (association) and art (mediation): What is a Verein today? And how do we mediate art in a way that pays justice to the Verein’s aim of making art available to large audiences while guaranteeing high quality of curation and art alike?

The research and teaching programme Urban Design, on the other hand, has just moved into a new university building that turns out being too small for all the classes, so that the seminar takes the opportunity to mobilise the study and reflection of methods with a view to teach and test them in situ.

The cooperation itself is an experiment. While the students gather on the steps of an open staircase leading to the upper exhibition room, it quickly transpires that in order to host a seminar in this space it is necessary to appropriate the foyer and provide some sort of infrastructure that allows us to work. Two of the students with carpenter skills and architecture backgrounds devise a workshop for the following week, setting up different stations and a work flow to build wooden tables and benches.

While they scheme, draw and work away on the workshop programme, the other students start their individual Debordian dérives around the Kunstverein, getting familiar with the surroundings and developing their motifs for the semester. A week later, the wood workshop takes off and in four hours, four tables and five benches are produced. Another week later, the tables are grouped together so that the whole group can sit around it to present the dérives and discuss the themes that emerged. The coproduction of the conditions under which the seminar can take place enables the familiarisation with the situation. Only now can the seminar proper begin to work on the series of Takes that respectively ask: Where are we here? What are we doing here? What do we want here?

## Community Building Poppenbüttel 43

During the summer semester 2016, a civil society initiative approaches the Research and Teaching Programme Urban Design with the idea to lobby for a community building to be developed in the newly planned and built ‘accommodation with perspective dwelling’, a programme devised to respond to the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ by the city’s accommodation agency Fördern&Wohnen. The initiative ‘Poppenbüttel Hilft e.V.’ from the direct neighbourhood asked for a rendering of a community building that would be developed with not for refugees.

Convinced by their idea that a community building should be part of the new residential area, the Urban Design team was amazed when the initiative asked for a rendering that was intended to encourage other philanthropists to provide financial support for the project. Countering their approach, the Urban Design team expanded its modes of showing and representing. Developing process drawings (working with a focus on the how to arrive at the what) and later a performative setting of two subsequent summer schools with similar performative approaches, the team and students were concerned with what presents more a crisis for refugees than a ‘refugee crisis’ and contextualised it in the broader housing crisis in Germany.

Several research projects looked into refugee accommodations and accommodating structures, administration and management, studied urban modes of dwelling-as-practice beyond the home and investigated possibilities to problematize the legal structure of accommodation. The notion of accommodation – as opposed to dwelling – was found highly problematic in that it denies any active designing of one’s everyday life by reducing it to the container space where one sleeps, eats and stores their things, but is unable to lead a household. Housing (or dwelling) in contrast, ‘is a doing, it is dwelt or inhabited as much as it is built’.<sup>2</sup> The first summer school (2016) involving international architecture students, old and new neighbours (refugees) and industrial school students worked on studying and reproducing modes of encounter so as to develop together what the community building would mean.

The second summer school (2017) further developed the work in process into a performative plan, inviting five, partly internationally renowned architecture offices to the constellation of actors. Rather than designing a building, the five teams tested spatial programmes of the everyday life, such as cooking and eating

together, play areas for children, spaces for discussion and encounter, spaces for workshops and retreat.

Throughout the experience of active encounter, the teams developed a 1:1 model of the intended purpose of future encounters to develop their design proposals from. Insisting on the idea that the building had to be planned, built and programmed together with all participants involved, the Urban Design team was awarded funding from the city's integration fund and organised a minimal working structure to integrate all involved actors into the open process.

## Friedrichstadt

A one-week videography autumn school brings an interdisciplinary group of master students to a small town in the north-west of Germany that has just been announced 'future city' as part of a federal programme supporting cities in various ambitions to develop strategies and research into their future under the auspices of climate change, demographic change and socio-economic challenges. The students are equipped with cameras, notebooks and the question »Friedrichstadt: what do you do?«.

They swarm out into the 400-year-old, block perimeter core with original housing stock and a decreasing population of 2,500 inhabitants and start collecting material: portraits of inhabitants, important places, biographies of houses and tenants, mapping the activities undertaken by the many tourists that add a third to the population every day, the canals, the bridges, the signs for letting rooms and holiday apartments. A second spring school engages deeper with the question of how (both temporary and permanent) residents dwell in this city, producing portraits and short films displaying the modes of residence and accommodation in this old yet failed utopia nevertheless attracting tourists and pensioners alike and appearing like a real life 1:1 model of the traditional small town. Friedrichstadt's baroque urban planning rationalism materialised in a grid structure that has over centuries enabled mixed forms of use (especially the mix of housing and work environments in one building and its changing over time). Although it remained relatively small as a town, it offers inquiries into the hidden potentials of resources built into the urban beyond the separation of functions. The students proceed to sharpen their questions and motifs centring around dwelling as practice and succeed in producing short films of inhabitants showing their houses, showing their adaptations to the old building stock, renovation measures and daily routines in and around their houses. A third summer school zooms into the individual room, asking Friedrichstadt: how do you accommodate?

1. Belina, Bernd, 'Scale und die Stadt', in *Handbuch Kritische Stadtgeographie*, ed. By Bernd Belina, Matthias Naumann and Anke Strüver (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2018), 54.
2. wohnbund e V. / HafenCity Universität, *Wohnen ist Tat-Sache: Annäherungen an eine urbane Praxis* (Berlin: Jovis Berlin, 2016)

# Zoom out

These descriptive glimpses into Urban Design formats illustrate, on the one hand, the scales and arenas on which teaching, research and practice take place – a foyer, a building site, a small town (from block to house to room) present entry points for inquiry that can then be scaled up and down, read diagrammatically and thus possibly inform a relational perspective from which problems can be reframed. The examples show how work in Urban Design departs from and shifts between different scales: The Kunstverein seminar started with building furniture so as to enable the group to work – both on the questions posed by the director and those posed in the Takes. The Community Building Poppenbüttel started with process drawings of envisioning encounters in the neighbourhood in relation to the absent presents of everyday lives disturbed by flight and forced migration. It developed into a complex setting of various actors (from Hamburg’s mayor figuring as patron to industrial school students, old and new neighbours, the accommodating agency, internationally renowned architecture offices such as Atelier Bow-Wow) and actants (building and planning law, institutional and individual interests and agendas). The autumn school in Friedrichstadt, conversely, started out from the observation that the utopia from the 17th Century, despite its failure to develop into the planned flourishing merchants’ town, still functions today – despite or because of literally by-passing functional separation in terms of its building stock. The project moved on by shifting the analytical scale from the town to the house to the room to unpack the respective dimensions of residents’ and tourists’ lived practices with a view to research their conditions of existence. This approach of minimal structure and open form draws on the learning from perspective. The term is in debt to the Learning from Las Vegas project. The perspective and the methodologies developed upon this perspective appear in all of the mentioned projects in research, teaching and practice.

On the other hand, the examples illustrate that rather than attempting to solve a (given) problem, the approach followed in this Urban Design understanding works towards a problematisation of how situations and settings are conceptualised and doable. Once more turning to the examples above, the Kunstverein seminar developed an open and publicly accessible seminar situation in the foyer of an established institution and engaged in an exercise of re-assembling the given structure. Problematizing the foyer’s counter epitomising an institution with overt and covert barriers, students, staff and the Kunstverein’s director discussed ideas of opening up the entrance situation and replacing the counter with the very tables and benches that the students had built. Engagement with the materialised yet socially constructed threshold of the counter enabled thinking the institution Kunstverein outside its seemingly set context. In Poppenbüttel, the Urban Design team’s intention was not – to the other actors’ disillusionment – to create a rendering, then plan and build a community building, but to problematize the very different conditions of those coming together in the neighbourhood: an existing, exclusively white and well-off community who live in their own, semi- or single detached homes vis-à-vis the new neighbours coming mostly but not exclusively from Syria and Afghanistan with various professional and social backgrounds. While

the civil society initiative from this community sought to ‘help’ and prevent what they thought could turn into a ghetto by inserting a community building into the new residential area, the Urban Design team started from a different angle and problematized the notion of encounter and the very fact that refugees in Germany are not allowed to lead their own household, to work, to determine their residential location due to the accommodating law. The project’s interest here relatively quickly turned into an agenda of making new agencies available and ‘building a proposition for future activities’. The very title of the project sought to open the brief ‘community building’ into broader engagement with global processes of and local responses to migration. Problematizing the challenges of migration and asylum is nowhere to be expected of a group alone. Experiences of German and international arrival cities show that institutional and civil society cooperation is promising. <sup>1</sup> This finding from UD co-teacher and urban sociologist Ingrid Breckner goes hand in hand with Ostrom’s main argument: in fact – and against a common or colloquial understanding – commons are often surprisingly well managed and offer pertinent insights for further projections. In the above assembled UD vignettes, self-build and 1:1 modelling of actual situations of encounters provided the data necessary to programme the future building as well as testing it performatively. Struggling with the regimes of urban organisation and governmental technologies – disciplining mo(ve)ments – that interfere with and disturb attempts to work with agencies already at work, the project now turns to considering how the role of refugees new neighbours can actually come into play, how the various actors involved in the project can move from talking about refugees to working with their new neighbours on planning and building and running the community building.

In their intended incompleteness, the brief vignettes figure to relate the emergence and further development of motifs out of their immediate contexts. A situation can only emerge as we actively become part of it, and only through co-producing a situation – beyond the confined spaces of classrooms, boardrooms and clubhouses – can a motif be articulated. This is the condition for unpacking connections between the urban built form and the social, historical and ideological subtexts inscribed into the built environment as well as into its use in our everyday lives. Problematizing the modes of coproduction (of a situation, of contexts, of parameters) may without doubt lead to abandon or alter previously set questions and aims, yet this is a central pre-requisite to develop strategies for the coproduction of knowledge concerned with urban and architectural forms of use. Playing with scale and acknowledging that ‘the researcher is present’ <sup>2</sup> offers didactic modes of teaching that recognise students as active co-producers of the academic setting. Yet while problematizing the existing order of things, the having-becomeness of the present and the conditions of its existence by drawing on the notion of play can mobilise students’ learning, this approach also poses challenges. The open and diagrammatic mode of the display allows to represent – making present – the explication of implicit knowledge without closing the form. Perhaps the greatest challenge is posed by the very obstacles that dominant scopical regimes reproduce: in a world that demands solutions, problematisation comes across as disturbance and open form(at)s are considered threats.

1. Breckner, Ingrid, 'Fluchtort Stadt. Flüchtlinge und Asylsuchende in urbanen Lebenswelten', in *Inklusion auf Raten: Zur Teilhabe von Flüchtlingen an Ausbildung und Arbeit*, ed. by Maren Gag and Franziska Voges (Münster u.a.: Waxmann, 2014)
2. Hildebrandt, Paula, 'The Researcher Is Present. Künstlerische Formen Der Wissensproduktion in Den Sozialwissenschaften.', in *Perception, Experience, Experiment, Knowledge.*, ed. by Susanne Stemmler (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2014), pp. 71–80

# Conclusion

Didactic approaches are forms of appropriating a situation. Understanding a situation's coming into being and its conditions of existence can enable a prospective perspective informed by its retrospective analysis. The issue for students and researchers alike is how such analyses pan out. If we draw on the bold but illustrative 1928 Chicago School proposition known as the Thomas theorem: 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' and slightly twist it, the understanding of a situation has real implications for the very situation in question. Far from enacting a questionable paradigm of planning – form follows function –, this line of thinking addresses the actual functions of the urban in its uses and relays them in a different light: it allows rethinking and questioning forms and functions and enables to move beyond such complexity-reducing parameters so as to engage with reality as socially produced and in its complexity. Unpacking the modes and means of such social coproduction necessarily undresses mechanisms of power that the powerful take great pains to cover in expensive garments so as to blind us to their frailty.

Contemporary planning regulations and regimes disturb or even block the proposed engagement of working with an open form in a minimal structure. Real Politik, legal requirements as well as institutional and managerial resources and responsibilities often interfere with alternative ways of handling contingency and complexity. Returning to the second vignette that started with the request for a rendering and turned into a full-fledged model project supported by the city's integration fund, the various actors involved in the building site proceed according to their schedules and routines, which makes it difficult for an academic team to keep up and take part in organising and designing the process. Adding to this, the disturbance of schedules and routines is definitely not something that large city agencies and building companies are embracing enthusiastically. Notwithstanding the welcoming of cheap student labour and skilled people who officially figure as 'refugees' rather than concrete workers, architects or civil engineers, the participatory planning and building process that the Urban Design team proposed as a result of their engagement with forced migration <sup>1</sup>, housing and dwelling <sup>2</sup>, self-build, transformation processes and low-budget urbanity <sup>3</sup> turned out to disturb the situation.

Although such draw backs were not new to the Urban Design team, excessive demands in terms of time spent with the project and on site, the organisation and preparation of further steps as well as the clearly emerging contrary interests of involved partners considerably stretched academic members of staff and students alike. Some turns and twists of the ongoing efforts to realise a coproduction across hypothetical small and great divides (rather than designing and constructing the building) point to the fundamental contradictions of the urban as practiced. It remains to be seen how the project proceeds, yet these contradictions and conflicts manifest the kind of learning from current urbanism that we need to push further so as to productively re-assemble spatial practices in ways that enhance the coproduction of knowledge.

1. Gudehus, Renke, and Jakob Kempe, 'Da Kann Ja Jeder Kommen. Eine Annäherung an Das Deutsche Asylrecht' (HafenCity Universität, Hamburg, 2015); Momic, Maja, 'Dwelling as a Fugitive Practice?' (HafenCity Universität, Hamburg, 2019); Riewe, Nina, 'Zwischen Ausstellung Und Unterbringung. Wohnen an Den "Orten Für Menschen": Konzepte, Konstellationen, Möglichkeiten' (HafenCity Universität, Hamburg, 2017)
2. wohnbund e V. / HafenCity Universität, *Wohnen ist Tat-Sache: Annäherungen an eine urbane Praxis* (Berlin: Jovis Berlin, 2016)
3. Kniess, Bernd, and Hans Vollmer, 'Praktiken Und Materialitäten Des Urbanen Selbstbaus Und Der Sparsamkeit', in *Wachstumsschmerzen. Gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen Der Stadtentwicklung Und Ihre Bedeutung Für Zürich*, ed. by Thomas Hengartner and Anna Schindler (Zürich: Zeismo, 2014), pp. 87–109

